

PinchukArtCentre with partners open “Worth Fighting For” exhibition and “Russian War Crimes” project in Cologne

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17th November 2022, Cologne, Germany – The PinchukArtCentre (Kyiv, Ukraine) in partnership with M HKA, ArtAsyl e. V., Rotary Club Köln-Ville, Zilkens Fine Art Insurance Broker presented a major group exhibition with over 45 artists **Worth Fighting For** in the temporary space on Oskar-Jäger-Strasse 97-99, 50933 Koeln. The exhibition includes the **Russian War Crimes** project presented by the PinchukArtCentre and Victor Pinchuk Foundation in partnership with the Office of the President of Ukraine, Ukraine’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ukraine 5AM Coalition and Ukrainian Association of Professional Photographers.

The *Worth Fighting For* exhibition is part of a deep cooperation between the PinchukArtCentre, one of the leading Ukrainian contemporary Art institutions, and the Antwerp contemporary art museum M HKA to address not only immediate urgencies but also strategic challenges. The project in Cologne will be open to the public until Wednesday 14th December.

The opening ceremony of the exhibition was introduced by **Berivan Aymaz**, Vice President of the State Parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia, **Gonca Türkeli-Dehnert**, State Secretary in the Ministry of Culture and Science, **Oleksii Makeiev**, Ukrainian Ambassador to Germany, **Dr. Ralph Elster**, Mayor of the City of Cologne, **Bart De Baere** and **Björn Geldhof**, curators of the exhibition.

Oleksii Makeiev, Ukrainian Ambassador to Germany, said: *“The arts must be protected. When these missiles fall from the skies, the arts in Ukraine, these murals on the walls in Kyiv, in Dnipro, these walls should be protected. This battle will end after all”.*

Bart De Baere, co-curator of *Worth Fighting For* and Director of M HKA, commented: *“It has been marvellous to be able to do this, for many reasons but first and foremost because of the sharing of capacity, through the dialogue between the collection of M HKA and art from the incredible art scene today in Ukraine”.*

Björn Geldhof, co-curator of *Worth Fighting For* and *Russian War Crimes* and Artistic Director of the PinchukArtCentre, added: *“At the beginning of the full scale invasion of Ukraine Vladimir Putin said that Ukrainian culture doesn’t exist, that Ukrainian art by definition doesn’t exist. When it happened the PinchukArtCentre team turned this institution into a place of cultural activism. And we understood together with the Victor Pinchuk Foundation that it was important to start a cultural front. One of the thing that we absolutely have to do is to defend and promote Ukrainian culture in any country we could”.*

The exhibition **Worth Fighting For** brings together an international selection of works from the M HKA/the collection of the Flemish Community, because of their emancipatory and empowering nature. They are shown in dialogue with works by Ukrainian artists, mostly produced in times of war. The outcome is a space that invites us to feel, think and reflect beyond the immediate urgencies of war.

The scars of the First and Second World War are engraved in the Flemish landscape. A symbolic inclusion to the exhibition is therefore the work *Flanders Fields (2000)*, by **Berlinde De Bruyckere** that references the First World War where Flanders was an essential battlefield. Then too, artists were sketching, writing poems, playing music while stationed in the trenches. It was a way not to lose touch of their humanity, a way to move beyond being an instrument of war.

The project consists of seven spaces, each with their own angle.

The project opens with the historical space of war. It is immediately followed by the space of World Making, the need to develop a meaningful relation to the world

The next two spaces deal with the notion of the landscape - Ukraine combines vast open horizons with industrial urbanism – and with the everyday life.

After that come spaces focused respectively on the individual stance and on the vital power of the collective. The last space is a direct encounter between catastrophe and art, with seven walls, each time a single art work on one side and some images from the Russian War Crimes exhibition on the other.

From the M HKA collection, part of the Collection of the Flemish Community, there are works from **Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin** (Turkey, 1957-2007), **Francis Alÿs** (Belgium, 1959), **Babi Badalov** (Azerbaijan, 1959), **Jan Cox** (Netherlands + Belgium, 1919-1980), **Berlinde De Bruyckere** (Belgium, 1964), **Jan de Lauré** (Belgium, 1978), **Marlene Dumas** (South Africa, 1953), **Jan Fabre** (Belgium, 1958), **Sheela Gowda** (India, 1957), **Hiwa K** (Iraq, 1975), **Barbara Kruger** (USA, 1945), **Mark Lewis** (Canada, 1958), **Kerry James Marshall** (USA, 1955), **Almagul Menlibayeva** (Kazakhstan, 1969), **Nástio Mosquito** (Angola, 1981), **Otobong Nkanga** (Nigeria, 1974), **ORLAN** (France, 1947), **Wilhelm Sasnal** (Poland, 1972), **Allan Sekula** (USA, 1951-2013), **Adrien Tirtiaux** (Belgium, 1980), **Luc Tuymans** (Belgium, 1958).

From Ukraine there are works from among others **Oleksandr Burlaka (1982)**, **Oksana Chepelyk (1961)**, **Danylo Galkin (1985)**, **Nikita Kadan (1982)**, **Alevtina Kakhidze (1973)**, **Nikolay Karabinovych (1988)**, **Lesia Khomenko (1980)**, **Kinder Album (1982)**, **Vlada Ralko (1969)**, **Oleksiy Sai (1975)**, **Andriy Sagaidakovskiy (1957)**, **Yevhen Samborsky (1984)**, **Anna Zvyagintseva (1986)**, the artist duos **Daniil Revkovskiy (1993) & Andriy Rachinskiy (1990)** and **Yarema Malashchuk (1993) & Roman Khimei (1992)**. Their works are in some cases early pieces, including a 1990s painting by **Andriy Sagaidakovsky**, depicting in exclusively blacks and greys a Ukrainian landscape with the text "Sometimes man is tired very much and wants to sleep a lot" - a poignant comment on the exhaustion of war. Most works have been created during this war, respond and reflect directly on current contexts. A symbolic example is that of **Lesia Khomenko**, who has engaged in painting soldiers and volunteers throughout the war. For the exhibition, she showcases a first group composition of soldiers supported by volunteers who formed a community around the army. It exemplifies Ukraine's unshakable unity, a common rally around the purpose of survival.

Web Sites

<http://imagineukraine.ensembles.org/>

<https://www.russianwarcrimeshouse.org>

From 17th June to 9th October 2022 the first iteration of the **Worth Fighting For** took place in the PinchukArtCentre in Kyiv, Ukraine, under the title **When Faith Moves Mountains**.

There too the **Russian War Crimes** project was integrated in it.

Location: Oskar-Jäger-Strasse 97-99, 50933 Koeln (former Automobile Sales Rooms)

Opening Period: November 15 - December 14, 2022

Opening hours: 10 am – 6 pm every day

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Organized by the PinchukArtCentre (Kyiv, Ukraine) and M HKA (Antwerp, Belgium)

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